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WILLIAM-HENRY-WILLCOX

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WILLIAM HENRY WILLCOX

A SKETCH BY HIS CHILDREN

WITH AN ADDRESS BY

GEORGE HERBERT PALMER

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This is peculiar to the good man,—to be pleased and content with what happens, and with the thread which is spun for him; and not to defile the divinity which is planted in his breast, but to preserve it tranquil, following it obediently, neither saying anything contrary to the truth, nor doing anything contrary to justice.—MARCUS AURELIUS.

WILLIAM HENRY WILLCOX was born January 28, 1821, at his father's home in Cedar Street, about two blocks from Wall Street, New York city, a region which at that date was just ceasing to be a residence quarter. He was the sixth child and third son in a family of seven.

Though city born and bred, the boy came through both father and mother from lines of New England farmers extending back for nearly two hundred years of Pilgrim ancestry. His father's early life had been spent in the farming town of Newport, New Hampshire, where the grandfather, Jesse, had been one of the original settlers, coming in and breaking ground before the American Revolution and just after the conquest

of Canada by the English had made the Connecticut Valley, previously much traveled by Indians in their raids upon the colonists, fairly safe for settlement. Perhaps because of his delicate health, the father did not continue the arduous life of his farming ancestors, but joined an older brother in business in New York city. Soon after, he married Sally Stanton, daughter of a merchant in Killingworth, Connecticut, which had been the birthplace of the grandfather, Jesse, and the family home for a hundred years before the removal to Newport. Throughout his subsequent life he was a resident of New York, and for most of that time an influential officer in the Presbyterian Church.

In the recollections of his early life which, when more than eighty years of age, Mr. Willcox wrote for his children and grandchildren, the picture of the father fills the whole centre. Speaking of his first day at school, he says: "I went out into the play-

ground with the rest of the boys, but as I was a shy and sensitive little stranger I took no part in their games. But I recall, as distinctly as if it was yesterday, how I stood off by myself and watched the others; and as I reflected that not one of them had such a father as I had (for I was sure there was not another such in all the world), I got to crying out of sorrowful pity for them all."

Father and son were much alike in character, and especially in a tender, affectionate sensitiveness of nature. This resemblance, and a perennial youthfulness of spirit which lightly spanned the difference of forty years between their ages, drew them into a close comradeship far from usual in a Puritan family of eighty years ago. The father died when William was sixteen years old. Sixty-five years afterward the son wrote: "Its effect upon myself was so crushing that it sometimes seemed as if I could not survive it. For there was no one else in the world

so dear to me as he. . . . He was a peculiarly gentle and loving nature, full of genial sympathy, of playful humor, and of such youthful feeling as made him strongly attractive to children, and drew them to him with the happy assurance that he was a true friend worthy of their fullest confidence and love. I have never met a more lovable man than he." Surely the mantle of the father descended upon the son, for no words can more truthfully describe his own family life and the feelings of his children.

At the age of twelve William completed the high school course, and except for one year was in business until his father's death. The methodical habits there formed were lifelong. No one could excel his neatness and accuracy in wrapping a parcel or footing a column of figures, and his handwriting was invariably clear. His father had himself purposed to become a minister, but had been compelled by ill health to give up his studies.

It was his ardent wish that this son should enter the calling thus closed to him, so at thirteen the lad returned to school for a time. Referring to this, the reminiscences explain: "Father wished me to study Greek, and Latin too, and prepare for college, for it was his earnest hope that I would some day be a minister. . . . I had at this time no reason to think myself a Christian, but father had an unwavering faith that I would become one, and he said that, if I was prepared for college, I could enter at once when I did become a Christian, and go on with my preparation for the work of the ministry to which he and mother had devoted me from childhood."

The father's death gave a new emphasis to the hopes he had cherished and uttered for his boy. "Father's last words to me as he lay upon his dying bed in regard to my becoming a Christian, emphasized by his triumphant, jubilant death, awakened in me a

new and more intense desire than ever to become what I knew I ought and what he wished me above all things else to be." Within six weeks he united with the Presbyterian church in which his father had been for many years an elder. A little later, a friend of his father's offered him a scholarship for four years in the University of the City of New York, now the New York University. Although the death of the main breadwinner, following directly upon business reverses, had left the family in straitened circumstances, the older brothers and sister agreed to help by providing him with board, lodging, clothing, and books. With this assistance he succeeded in fitting for college in a little more than two years, and entered New York University.

In 1839, when he began his college course, this university was far less prosperous than either before or after. Its doors had been opened to students for only seven

years, and within that period what was perhaps the most elaborate academic building in the country had been erected on the east side of Washington Square in the extreme outskirts of the city. But the bright hopes which surrounded the cradle of the new university had been grievously disappointed. In building their educational palace a crushing debt of more than $170,000 had been incurred; a bitter controversy between faculty and chancellor had led to the removal of nearly all the teachers, and to an investigation on the part of the Senate of New York State which had revealed great laxity in the financial administration. These disasters had been intensified by the terrible panic of 1837 and the subsequent years of business depression, which had made it almost impossible to secure new contributions, and extremely difficult to obtain payment of amounts previously pledged.

The class with which William entered col-

lege contained thirty-two members, among them Samuel Penniman Leeds, who, though four years his junior, was later to become his intimate and lifelong friend. Dr. Leeds has kindly furnished the following reminiscences of their college life together:

"Although both had been born and reared in the city, we had never met. Nor did we soon become well acquainted. I remember him at that time as a bright-eyed youth of ruddy complexion. But, joining the same literary and Greek letter societies, we gradually became better acquainted, until in the latter half of the course we knew each other well, and in our last year might be called intimates; indeed, at that time he rendered me invaluable aid, for which I can never be too grateful, in my entrance upon the Christian life.

"In college he felt, like the rest of us, the benign influence of our honored and beloved President, or 'Chancellor,' the Honorable

Theodore Frelinghuysen. Of his studies I think Latin interested him as much as any, both for the sake of the young and skillful teacher, and because of the character of the language. Professor Palmer, of Harvard, in an admirable address at his funeral emphasized just that quality of his (Dr. Willcox's) mind which so greatly distinguished the literary work of the Romans: Orderliness — orderliness with clearness and moderation — was a marked feature in his mental operations. Unfortunately for us, I think, our very gifted professor of Greek gave us too much of Plato, one of whose works he was then editing; Plato was too far above us striplings. Able Dr. Draper, afterwards of European celebrity, professor of Chemistry and Natural History, fascinated us all, especially in the latter department.

"In our debating society, the Philomathean, Willcox fairly shone. None of his mates was his equal; he excelled in force

and lucidity. He could marshal his arguments with great power. I should say that his favorite themes were ethical. His contributions to our weekly newspaper were markedly superior to others, as I, as editor, can testify.

"Uncompromising, positive, and not popular, though always kindly, his influence in college was strongly Christian; his efforts for the cause of religion were earnest and constant, and his life was exemplary."

The secret society of Psi Upsilon, which had been founded at Union College in 1833, had extended to New York University in 1837, and in 1843 had ten chapters in as many leading colleges and universities. Willcox was one of the ten members of that fraternity in his class, and in his senior year was the leader of the chapter. In the same year, when the second general convention of the fraternity was held in New York, he was made president of the con-

vention, and a year later he edited the second general catalogue of the fraternity.

As a student he took high rank, graduating in 1843 at the head of a class of unusual ability, in which for sixty years he held his influence. The class was almost unique in academic history in that it observed an annual reunion. These meetings Mr. Willcox in later years never failed to attend, and surviving members testify to his spiritual leadership in the intimate talks around the board.

Immediately after graduation he entered upon his theological studies. The close comradeship with Mr. Leeds continued through seminary days and the year which immediately followed. Of this period Dr. Leeds writes:

"In 1843, after some hesitation and delay, I entered the Union Theological Seminary, of which he was already a member, and there for three years we were closely

associated. We were among the chief founders of a literary society in which he was both active and useful. He was very often at my home; my mother came to love him almost like a son. We had many friends in common. Our walks and talks together were innumerable. Those were great days in the Anti-slavery conflict, — the annexation of Texas, that prolific source of trouble, was completed then; and his heart and mind were always thoroughly loyal to Freedom. The position of the American Board of Missions towards slaveholding greatly occupied our thoughts.

"In the study of Hebrew he took no interest, and dropped it, I think, immediately after leaving the seminary. Nor, although he was far better versed in Greek than most of our class, did he give himself enthusiastically to the study of the Greek Testament under the tuition of that great Biblical scholar, Dr. Edward Robinson. In those

days it was theology which well-nigh monopolized attention, the other disciplines being neglected. While faithful to them (he was ever a faithful man), his tastes and the conditions of the times combined to make him very assiduous in the study of theology. Within the previous ten years and after a fierce struggle, the Presbyterian Church of the United States, with which Union Seminary was connected, had been divided. The professor of theology, a saintly man, fair-minded, of moderate temper and strong intellect, was admirably adapted to most of us, beginners as we were; but Willcox sometimes lamented that our opportunities were not greater and such as were enjoyed at some other schools of sacred learning where the grand Dr. Taylor of New Haven and the brilliant Professor Park of Andover were then teaching. His strong, keen, well-balanced mind was exceedingly interested in theological study and earnestly devoted to it.

"Not without hesitation and consultation with older friends, he presented himself for 'license' to the then Fourth Presbytery of New York, in 1846, finishing his studies at the seminary soon afterward. Ready for work, the opportunity soon opened to him for undertaking a 'mission' of an unusual character in Norwich, Connecticut, a place in which he had relatives and was quite at home. On the 'Plain' near the monument of Uncas stood an unused church edifice of average size. Four gentlemen, residing in the neighborhood, conceived the idea of gathering a congregation for it, composed of their families and others of like inclination, together with the people working in a factory near by. They invited the young minister to this work. It occurred to him to propose that I should be associated with him, and the proposition was accepted. Each of us preached once a Sunday, and together we conducted a Sunday evening service. At

his suggestion we gave a course at the mid-week meeting on the elements of theology, in which we took turns, each rehearsing the other's discussion or lecture of the preceding week. It was fortunate that we agreed so perfectly. But with what pains and previous consultations, alike in our study and in many and long walks in beautiful Norwich, we prepared ourselves! I may add that the lectures were a decided success.

"After nine months my health compelled my departure, while he continued, I know not how long, in the work which he now did alone."

After Mr. Leeds left him, he continued at Norwich for a second year. But this pastoral experience did not solve the intellectual doubts or dissipate the spiritual clouds left unremoved by his seminary studies. Writing of the period, he says in his reminiscences: "My mind was not at rest. Some of the theological teachings which had been given

me in the seminary, and which were generally accepted as orthodox by the ministers with whom I was acquainted, did not seem to me to be true. These related especially to the character of God, who was represented as an arbitrary sovereign rather than a loving father, and the freedom of man, who was held to be a helpless captive of his own depraved nature, which nature itself, inherited from Adam, was taught to be a sufficient ground for his condemnation and punishment. I thought a man was no more to blame for the moral nature God had given him than he was for the color of his eyes; and that the sweet name of father by which God himself had taught us to address him was virtually his declaration that he regards and loves every man as his child, and will do all that he wisely and properly can for his welfare and happiness. But such views were heretical. And I could not preach with comfort or success till I knew what and why I

believed, and was prepared to state and vindicate my views."

Giving up his work in 1848, he spent most of the following two years in private reading and study. He was a resident licentiate indeed in Union Theological Seminary, but the seminary was not inaccessible from the house of the sister with whom he was living on Staten Island, and the connection, entirely unmentioned in his reminiscences, was probably little more than nominal. These two years were broken also by his preaching for a short time as a temporary supply at South Royalston, in Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1848–1849.

The result of this period of study and thought may best be stated in his own words, written more than fifty years afterward: "My object was to read theology for myself and, if possible, fight my way through the doubts and difficulties that so annoyed me and interfered with my obtaining a clear

perception and firm embrace of the truth. I read the writings of different schools, accepting in each whatever I could see to be reasonable and true, and discarding whatever I could not. In this way I reached at last what I felt to be solid ground, where I found mental peace and comfort. I adopted some views which I supposed to be original and peculiar to myself, but afterwards I was not a little pleased and encouraged to hear the same views advocated by Professor Park in his lecture-room in Andover. I was now ready to speak with positiveness and assurance that I was right, even if some of my ministerial associates did regard me as rather unsound."

In the spring of 1850, when he was twenty-eight years old, he accepted an invitation to Elmwood, a growing settlement near the Providence boundary line in the town of Cranston, Rhode Island. A church building had been erected, and an effort was

being made to build up a church. There he remained for two years. His residence, only about a mile from the centre of Providence, gave him an opportunity to form pleasant acquaintances among the churches of that city. In one of them, indeed, he conducted, with much pleasure to himself, a large Bible class. In the spring of 1851, March 5, he was ordained, and two months later the Elmwood Church was formally organized.

At the time he was invited to Elmwood, he was considering a visit to the West with a view to possible settlement. But his younger brother, Giles Buckingham, was then studying at Andover Seminary, and after graduation would be ready to accompany him. So the elder waited, and in June, 1852, after ending his connection with the Elmwood Church, the two set out together for Chicago, making brief stays at many smaller places, and one of several weeks in Detroit. The climate proved unfavorable to the visitors,

as it did to thousands of other newcomers of that period. The thought of permanent residence was abandoned, and they shortly turned back, the elder brother going to Kennebunk, Maine. While he was in the West, the Union Church of that town had invited him to come and preach to them, and had waited for his return. After listening to him for three Sundays, they unanimously invited him to become their pastor. He accepted, and October 28, 1852, was installed in his first pastorate.

Kennebunk was a small but prosperous seacoast town in southwestern Maine. It had a little water power from the Mousam, which flowed through it, had sent out a number of coasting and fishing vessels, and was the home of retired sea-captains. For some decades past it had been steadily, though slowly, increasing in population, participating, doubtless, in the general prosperity of the farming, fishing, and trading

activities of Maine during the first half of the nineteenth century.

At his installation the young minister met Miss Annie Goodenow, daughter of Daniel Goodenow, judge of the Supreme Court of Maine, and resident of the county seat and adjoining town of Alfred. Six months later they were married, and for four happy years they lived and worked in Kennebunk. There two children were born to them. But the town ceased to grow. Indeed, for the last half of the nineteenth century, in company with many other coast towns of Maine, it almost steadily decreased in population. Many of the young people of the town and the church did not remain in Kennebunk, and there were few newcomers.

In the summer of 1856 Mr. Willcox preached for part of his vacation at the Bethesda Church of Reading, Massachusetts, which was then without a head, but declined an invitation to become its pastor. A year

later the invitation, coupled with more favorable terms, was renewed and was accepted. He was dismissed at Kennebunk June 8, 1857, and installed at Reading July 2 of the same year. Thus began a pastorate which continued until the end of his active work as a clergyman, nearly twenty-two years later.

Reading was a town of about three thousand inhabitants, twelve miles north of Boston, and on one of the two railways between that city and Portland. This line had been opened less than twenty years before, and, largely as a result, Reading was beginning a process of change which still continues, has transformed it from a farming town into a place of suburban homes, and has swelled its numbers and increased its wealth and prosperity. The church to which he went, although only eight years old, had about double the membership of the Kennebunk Church, and throughout his pas-

torate continued to have a steady, normal growth.

The quiet rural life of such a place, with its simple sturdy thought, was that for which, both by mind and temperament, he was best fitted. His sermons were direct and simple. But, clear in structure and carefully thought and written, they were stimulating alike to the intellectual and the spiritual life of his hearers. His own long wrestling for his faith had given him a deep sympathy with honest doubt, and he met it with a respect and consideration like that which Christ showed for doubting Thomas. The close dependence of his own spiritual life upon his theological convictions made him share the classic belief of New England divines, that Christian emotion is valuable only when it rests upon sound intellectual foundations.

This belief, that Christian character must grow out of Christian truth, he developed

in a sermon on the text beginning, "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God," in which he dwelt upon the significance of the connective, "therefore."

"The writer of the epistle had been unfolding the great truths that constitute the gospel. Starting from the terribly obvious fact of man's wickedness, among the Jews as well as the Gentiles, he had portrayed the remedy that God's yearning love had devised for the salvation of his sinful children. And, having presented the system of truths that circle around the cross of Christ, as the planets around the sun, he turns to consider the fruit which they ought to bear in our daily lives. . . .

"When men say, as they so often do, that what our times need is not devotional preaching, but practical, their statement is true or false according to what it means. If it means that we do not want the hard and juiceless speculations of some theological

theorist or the cast-iron logic of some idolater of a theological system who is more intent on exhibiting and proving than on using it, surely nothing can be more true. Such defrauding of the people with stone and chips in place of bread ought to provoke condemnation. The shepherd has no right to offer to his flock anything which they cannot digest and transform into spiritual muscle. But if the statement means that our times do not need the clear expression of the great facts and truths that constitute the gospel, and the application of these truths to all the circumstances of daily life, as the farmer applies his plow and harrow to his farm, for cultivating and developing Christian duties and graces, — if anything like this be what is meant, then nothing could be more foolish or false. This is precisely what above all things else our times do need. Amid the multiform and buzzing theories and speculations with which the social atmosphere

is so alive, nothing is more needed than the distinct and authoritative voice of God's Word, pointing out the path of Christian morality and saying to men as from the opened heavens, 'This is the way, walk ye in it.' We can no more have in the community such Christian virtues as are trustworthy without clear and earnest inculcation of the sublime truths from which alone such Christian virtues spring, than we can have cherries or pears without the trees to bear them. And the heaven-taught Apostle showed the truest wisdom when he linked together the doctrinal part of his letter with the hortatory and ethical by a 'therefore.' 'I beseech you, *therefore*, brethren, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice unto God.' It is in these truths that the power of the gospel resides. It is they that constitute the gospel message."

He was a devoted student of the Bible. That book, interpreted by reason and spirit-

ual experience, was his storehouse of truth. He studied it assiduously, and trained his people to study it. The mid-week Bible-class, conducted throughout his life, was a stronghold of his pastoral work. He was tactful in its management, gently checking the forward and encouraging the retiring. A skillful expositor, he always avoided profitless disputation, and held his class close to the exegetical unfolding of the lesson. His teachings were unwontedly liberal, and the divine Fatherhood was their central tenet. Every interpretation was tried by that touchstone, and any dogma which contravened supreme love and justice was thereby discredited. Over the conflict between science and religion, disturbing to many during the years of his Reading pastorate, he felt no alarm. Truth, he urged, must be self-consistent, and all genuine investigators, though in different fields, should be allies and friends.

While not lacking acumen either in lec-

ture-room or pulpit, his object in each was neither intellectual conviction nor emotional exaltation, but life. Life according to the pattern of the Scriptures, life in communion with God, was his frequent theme. "We are to be in entire sympathy with Christ, as he was with God. Our lives are to flow in the same direction; our aims and aspirations are to fasten upon the same ends; our affections are to be centred upon the same object."

A sermon from the text, "He surnamed them Boanerges," describes how this loving sympathy for Christ transformed John, the fiery Son of Thunder, into the beloved disciple, and finds in the personal history of the Evangelist an explanation of his message. "No other of the New Testament writers dwells so often and so emphatically upon love—God's love to us and our love to him—as does John. No other so teaches us to put our loyalty to Christ into the form

of a personal and all-controlling affection for him."

His preaching laid stress upon the performance of the common duties of life, not as forming the essence of religion, but as the expression of this controlling affection, as the means both of developing and of manifesting the filial spirit. A sermon on St. Paul's injunction, "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all for the glory of God," sets forth with homely detail the sordid tasks which engross most lives, and concludes with this characteristic passage: "Let one look upon every duty as assigned him by Christ and to be done for Christ, and it matters not what the duties are, great or small, muscular or mental, domestic or social, they are all dignified and ennobled by the exalted motive which prompts them. . . . The real worth of any deed depends not upon its importance to human view, nor upon the great-

ness and value of its consequences; it depends entirely upon the spirit in which it is done. The artist may take an almost worthless lump of clay and so mold into it his conception of grace and beauty as to transform it into a work of art that kings may covet. So may a true and earnest soul beautify and ennoble the most humble life by vitalizing it with Christian grace."

After more than twenty happy and effective years had been spent as a pastor in Reading, other duties fell upon him which entailed leaving that field of work. Valeria Goodenow, an aunt of Mrs. Willcox, and in early life a member of Judge Goodenow's household in Alfred, had married Daniel P. Stone, who afterwards, as a dry-goods merchant and private banker in Boston, accumulated a large fortune. They had no children to whom it would naturally descend. At the time when Mr. Willcox

removed to Reading from Kennebunk, they were living very quietly in Boston, and later even nearer, in Malden. Mrs. Stone came frequently to visit her favorite niece, whose delicate health and heavy duties as mother of a large family kept her closely at home. In 1876, when Mr. and Mrs. Stone were seventy-eight and seventy-three years of age respectively, they asked Mr. Willcox to draw their wills. Several drafts were made and rejected, but finally one was found satisfactory, approved by a lawyer, and executed, December 11, 1876. The will of Mr. Stone gave legacies to his relatives and left the remainder of the property to Mrs. Stone with the suggestion that part of it be given to charitable institutions. It named three executors, two of his business associates and Mr. Willcox. When Mr. Stone died, in 1878, and the property proved to amount to more than two million dollars, Mrs. Stone asked Mr. Willcox

to resign his pastorate and become her private secretary and confidential adviser, at the same salary he had been receiving. He did so, — was dismissed from his charge at Reading March 5, 1879, and a few months later removed to Malden.

During the next few years, after the bequests made by Mr. Stone to his relatives and the gifts in lieu of bequests made by Mrs. Stone to her relatives and friends had consumed nearly one half of the estate, more than one million dollars was given to educational and religious objects. The leading beneficiaries were the American Missionary Association and Phillips Academy, Andover, each receiving one hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars. Wellesley College received one hundred and ten thousand, Amherst and Bowdoin colleges each seventy-five thousand, Drury College seventy thousand, Oberlin College and Chicago Theological Seminary had each fifty thousand,

Dartmouth College thirty-five thousand, and Hamilton College thirty. The American College, Howard University, and the Boston Young Men's Christian Association received twenty-five thousand each, and the seven following twenty thousand each: Iowa, Ripon, Olivet, Robert, Illinois, and Beloit colleges, and Hampton Normal Institute. This distribution was made almost entirely on the recommendation of Mr. Willcox. He felt strongly his responsibility, and spared no pains to meet it wisely. He made several extended journeys in order to investigate and report upon institutions under consideration. From his youth he had been keenly interested in educational work. A parishioner recalls his urgent plea in his early ministry for contributions to support struggling schools and colleges in the newer sections of the country. Christian education of the young he always felt of vital importance to our national future,

and it was a great joy to him to be instrumental in furthering it. From youth, too, he had been an Abolitionist, and when at last the slaves were freed, his first thought was for their education. Naturally, then, the largest gift made by his advice was to a society for the education of the negro; and among the denominational colleges of the great Middle West were many beneficiaries.

This work of personal investigation and voluminous correspondence made the five years following 1878 perhaps the busiest of his life, as in the service which they rendered to the community they were the most significant. It is too soon to determine how far time will approve his judgment touching the disbursement of Mrs. Stone's wealth, but one of the foremost educators this country has known said recently that he believed the intervening decades have already pronounced those gifts judicious investments.

These busy years were ended by what was undoubtedly the severest trial of his mature life. Close intimacy with Mr. Willcox had given Mrs. Stone such confidence in his judgment and his sympathetic appreciation of her wishes that she had decided to leave whatever property she might possess at her death to be distributed solely at his discretion. She had accordingly, within a year after her husband's death, made a new will, contrary to the earnest advice of Mr. Willcox, revoking the instrument which he had drawn for her three years before, and making him her sole executor with authority to distribute the balance of her property according to his judgment to such philanthropic objects as those to which she had so largely given. At her death in 1884, the heirs entered suit to break this will on the familiar grounds that the testatrix was of unsound mind and had been unduly influenced. The jury found unanimously that

when Mrs. Stone made the will she was mentally competent, but disagreed as to whether she was unduly influenced. Under the advice of counsel the contest was settled by a compromise, whereby a further fifty thousand dollars was distributed among Mrs. Stone's relatives, and the balance of the estate to charitable and educational institutions. This trial was a bitter grief to Mr. Willcox. Conscious of his own sincerity and disinterestedness, he was cut to the quick that any should so far misunderstand him as to impugn his motives. And his keen sense of justice was outraged at an effort, through legal technicalities and distorted testimony, to frustrate Mrs. Stone's wishes, and, in violation of formal promises, to gain possession of her money in a way which he regarded as little better than robbery.

During the years between Mrs. Stone's death in 1884 and his own death in 1904, he was much occupied in the care of various

religious and educational institutions. From October, 1877, he was a corporate member of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, and from 1887 he was President of the Trustees of Jaffna College, Ceylon. Between 1876 and 1886 he was a trustee of Drury College, and from 1879 to 1882 a trustee of Abbot Academy, Andover. In 1878 he was made a trustee of Phillips Academy, Andover, under whose ward is the Theological Seminary, and in 1879 a trustee of Straight University. From 1891 he was a trustee of the Malden Hospital. Wellesley College made him one of its trustees in 1878, member of the Executive Committee of that Board in 1883, and chairman thereof in 1884. In 1894 he was made president of the Congregational Education Society. Two of his sermons, "Hope for the Country" (1863) and "A Christian, What, How, Why" (1874), were published in pamphlet form, and he was an occasional

contributor to the "Congregationalist," the "Advance," and the "American Agriculturalist."

This last suggests one of his chief pleasures during his late leisurely years. His garden, indeed, was through life a resource, the place for daily exercise and refreshment, and for working off the Monday headache to which, while a preacher, he was victim. But there was more time and more money for its cultivation in these last two decades. His rose-bushes, grapevines, and pear-trees he watched through their various phases as a mother her babe's progress. His love for growing things was part of his religious feeling. It was the recognition of the divine presence, revealing itself throughout nature, and thus giving to nature its meaning and value.

This love for fresh young life had a part in determining his friendships. More and more, as he felt his own life behind him, did

his heart go out to those who had its problems still to face. His close connection with Wellesley College, as trustee and administrator of numerous scholarships, brought him into intimate relation with many of its students. To him they brought their perplexities and their joys, and were always sure of counsel and sympathy. Writes one from a deeply saddened home: "He gave a father's tenderness to some who had never known it." And another, now an influential teacher: "He stood to me for all that was best in the Wellesley spirit, and no greater inspiration came to me from Wellesley than he gave." It was his joy to have these young friends often at his home, and after they left college, frequent interchange of letters kept him in touch with their trials and successes. Not a few have long felt his unwavering interest and affection among their richest treasures. This assurance, to a stranger, might sound extravagant, but it comes from

one who weighs her words: "The beauty of his character, his tenderness, breadth of view, sympathy, will never leave me. To know him was to realize what the love of Christ means."

The ripening years brought many other friendships. He was always loath to hold a trusteeship unless he could really know the institution and its officers, and help them in their work. Accordingly, feeling himself too remote for such duties, he resigned from the board of Drury College after eight years' connection with it. That he minimized his service there is indicated by the statement of Rev. N. J. Morrison, then its president: "He is reckoned by me among three or four friends who have done me most good in my life work and whose friendship I have counted most precious."

To nearer trusts he could give more attention. As a pastor his connection with Andover Seminary had been close, and

after he became a trustee its interests were much in his heart. He was pained by the Andover controversy. He deplored the loss in numbers and activity, and he sympathized with the men whose intellectual honor was challenged. To the weary committee-meetings and court proceedings he gave searching and tireless heed. Writes President Harris of Amherst, then of the Andover faculty: "He was a wise and courageous counsellor in those trying times." A minute passed by the trustees shortly after his death records his long service of more than twenty-six years, and continues: "He has been constant in this trust. The wisdom of his counsel, the firmness of his purpose, the independence of his thought, the uprightness of his intention, and the generosity of his hand have never failed."

Of the Congregational Education Society he was for ten years president. Its work of aiding schools and colleges in the rapidly

growing West he felt strategic. Its former secretary, Rev. W. E. Barton, thus speaks of his administration: "Six years we worked together in the Education Society, meeting almost constantly and discussing plans in which his judgment almost invariably coincided with my own. . . . Dr. Willcox treated me with the kindness which a father would show to a son." And its present secretary affirms: "He was appreciated on this board for his statesmanship."

But dearest to him of all these enterprises, second only to his own home and fireside, was Wellesley College. He knew and loved its founder, Henry F. Durant, and shared his hopes for its future. Its young and brilliant president, Alice Freeman, came to her office largely through his instrumentality, and had through her administration his chivalric support. Though grieving for the college at her resignation, he bent all his efforts to making smooth and clear the

path of her successor. If the early history of Wellesley is ever written, it will appear that the chairman of the executive committee watched with guiding and at times with controlling hand, its every forward step. For special committee-work, as the care of buildings and grounds, he was always ready, going out from Malden several times a week, even in severe weather. At eighty, feeling that possibly a younger man in that post might be more acceptable, he offered his resignation of the chairmanship, but the hearty refusal to accept it assured him that he was still valued. This appreciation of his services gave him keen pleasure.

Well might they prize him. It was not Andover Seminary alone that found him "a wise and courageous counsellor." His courage, even in age, when many grow timid, was unfailing. "Just and upright in his dealings, fearless for the truth as he

saw it," is another estimate from one who worked with him in public affairs. And no consideration of personal ease would stand in his way in promoting that truth. For a timid administration he had scant tolerance. Did the larger interests demand an individual sacrifice? Then with loving frankness he would go to the individual and secure his abnegation for the sake of the larger good. Time and again such a difficult task has been laid upon him, and has been performed so frankly and sweetly that no lingering bitterness has marred its accomplishment. A sermon which he preached during the Civil War took as theme the sign over a recruiting office, "Men Wanted." One passage in it well describes this trait in his own character:

"God demands brave men. Not men of mere bulldog courage. That is an animal trait. But men of moral courage, who dare to do right, however unpopular the

right may be, to oppose and, if need be, to denounce the wrong, however many or influential may be its friends. Men who are willing to take some responsibility in their several spheres of activity, not merely following but leading, not merely sustaining but pushing, the thing which their judgment pronounces right and proper to be done. Men who have a mind of their own and are willing to express it; and a will of their own which, with due regard to others' opinions and an open-eyed candor in search of light, they yet tenaciously follow until some better path appears."

Other side-lights upon his character do his sermons throw. The earliest preserved, dated 1849, is on Ambition. The young man of twenty-five sets before himself and others this goal: "True greatness does not consist in any brilliancy of outward achievement; it consists in greatness of soul, in firmness of adherence to what is good and

right and true. It is found most perfectly in him who most resembles the great and unsearchable One." And almost of the same period (1851) are two sermons affirming "constant happiness the Christian's privilege." That, too, was an ideal to strive for. For he asserts, much later (1885): "It is a thing to be gradually learned, as a child learns to walk or to sing. We are not to expect to acquire this grace in a day or a month. True, there are among us great differences of disposition and of temperament, so that it is vastly easier for one to be contented than another. But Christian contentment is no part of one's inheritance, and no expression of mere temperament; it is a trait and expression of Christian character."

And the sermon continues with what is, perhaps, more completely than any other passage of Mr. Willcox's writing, a key to his character. His recognition of a divine order and his purpose to identify his will with

it, in other words, his complete unselfishness, underlie and explain his courage and resolution, his cheerfulness, his patience, and his tenderness. Hear his statement of this cardinal doctrine:

"If we would gladden and beautify our lives with Christian contentment, it is of the very first importance that we hold it as a Christian axiom, notwithstanding all our ignorance and all the objections that ignorance urges, that our entire experience of life is superintended for our good by divine wisdom and love. We must make familiar with our daily thoughts the fact, we are so prone to forget, that this world is God's schoolhouse and this life a process of spiritual education for our life eternal. And our Great Teacher is great enough to attend to the needs of each one of his children as constantly and wisely as if that were his only care.

"One main reason why we are so often

discontented is because we look at our experiences simply as they are in themselves and overlook their relation to our preparation for the great future. We are like little children who complain of being sent to school and cry over the lessons that are educating them for the duties and honors of life. But just as fast and as thoroughly as we learn to regard this world as a training school for heaven and this life as an apprenticeship for the life to come, and look to Christ for the aid we need to realize this design in our experience, just so fast shall we learn to say, with the Apostle, 'I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.'

"We often speak or think of the crosses we have to bear in life and overlook the fact that they are of our own manufacture. A material cross is composed of two pieces crossing each other. If there is no crossing, there can be no cross. So it is often with those spiritual crosses on which our content-

ment is crucified. They are too often formed by our wills crossing that of God. Let us learn to put our will by the side of his, so that the two shall be parallel, and the cross is gone. In a word, the one lesson which Christian contentment should require us thoroughly to master is just this: to recognize God's wisdom and love in all our experience, look upon it all not simply as it appears in the light of this world, but as it is to be seen when viewed through the eye of faith.

"The balloonist tells us that as he floats above the sea he can look down through many feet of water and distinctly see the ocean's bottom. It is somewhat so in our spiritual experience. So long as we live down on the same plane with the world, as we look out on the sea of life we see only the tossing of the surface; all in commotion; nothing at rest. The rise and fall of prosperity and adversity, of joy and sorrow,

of peace and trouble, are ceaseless as the waves. These seem to make up the whole of life, for we can see little else. Our views of things are all horizontal, and therefore superficial. The great undercurrents of life we do not see. We cannot look down into the underlying depths and comprehend the inner meaning of our experiences. And so human life seems only a restless, troubled sea. But as God's providence cuts the cords, one after another, that have held us down and allows us to rise into a purer air and nearer to him, then as we look down upon life from a higher point, everything is changed. The turbulent waves no longer appear. They have given place to a great calm. The surface no longer bounds our vision. We look through and below that to the changeless and all-sustaining love which underlies and upholds our entire life. And if we can learn to live our Christian life at such a spiritual elevation, where we can look

down upon our experience and see it somewhat as the angels do, such a view will enable us so to comprehend our Father's design in it all, that it will be all luminous with his wisdom and love. And so, with jubilant thankfulness and Christian love, we too shall be able to say, with the Apostle, 'I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.'"

One more extract we cannot omit, for it aptly describes Mr. Willcox in his last years. It is from a sermon on fading leaves, and urges that characters should ripen as does the foliage, growing more beautiful to the end. Among its pictures is this:

"Here is another in whose life the years bring out an ever increasing beauty. The flesh may fail, but his sympathies remain fresh and tender. His heart is too affectionate to grow old. His trials have only mellowed him for the prompter appreciation of the trials of others. He looks upon his

fellow-men as fellow-children with himself of one and the same Father in heaven, and he receives delightful proofs of the fact in the esteem and confidence with which they honor both him and themselves. Such a man ripens in the community like one of these maples. The very sight of his benevolent face is at once a joy and an inspiration. Unconsciously as the tree itself, the beauty of his character and life drops a blessing into every heart and pronounces a benediction upon every beholder."

To such a man, the end of his earthly life seemed rather a new beginning to be anticipated with the happy confidence with which he met every life experience ordained by his Father. He had known for some years of an affection of the heart which he believed would prove fatal. But his tranquil spirit recognized in it only the long-awaited summons to the life of which he had written to one of his earliest friends:

"It is becoming every day more and more the very sunshine of my life. It constantly seems nearer and nearer, more and more real, more and more attractive. When I think of Gulliver or Pease, with whom only yesterday, as it were, I was delightfully talking about that spirit world and its attractions, and, now that both of them are there, already experiencing the wonderful and endless life of which we were talking, it seems as near and as easy of access as the adjoining room. Strange that we do not think of it more, and find a more constant joy and inspiration in the anticipation of it, as one does in the anticipation of a trip to Europe and the Holy Land. When I think of the life eternal, comparing with this somewhat as the life of the lark soaring and singing towards heaven compares with his life in the unhatched egg, I long for the coming of that spiritual birthday when I shall be born out of the weakness and imperfections

of this life into the glorious liberty and power and growth of the endless life."

During much of the last year of his life he seems to have been conscious that the end was near, though he tenderly refrained from remarks that would pain those who loved him. Chiefly through learning of his words to friends less close, and through the careful arrangement of matters which might be affected by his death, have his family come to realize how much the thought was with him.

On the evening of November 21, 1904, as he was seated in his customary chair by the fireside and listening to reading, there gradually came to him a sharp distress for breath. We knew subsequently that it was referable to the tale. The story of negro persecution had so roused his ready sympathy as to quicken the heart action to the danger point. The physician came promptly; and though for a time he seemed dying,

the attack yielded to treatment, and for two weeks recovery promised. They were happy weeks, with little acute suffering. Much of the time he was able to sit in his easy-chair, or propped by pillows in bed, and to enjoy hearing reading aloud. He often glanced at the morning paper, and from his many affectionate letters derived great pleasure. His children were all at home for Thanksgiving, and he heard of their interests with all his old-time sympathy. The flowers with which friends kept his sick-room fragrant were a fresh gladness to him daily, and the beauty of the outdoor world never palled. He liked to have his bed so placed that the sunshine glory was visible from his pillow, and at night would often from his reclining-chair watch the fading splendor. He was more patient even than his wont in pain and weariness, and his gentle humor did not fail. He was thoughtful too for his work, and secured

the postponement of an important meeting "for a week," when, he thought, he should be able to attend. It was not to be. After twelve peaceful days of apparent progress came a sharp change, and he failed rapidly. The last days were unconscious, but with occasional glimmerings in which he recognized his dear ones and bade them a voiceless farewell. At ten o'clock on the evening of December 15 his breath ceased. It was the gentle, peaceful release from the flesh for which at family prayers he used to offer a petition.

His body rests in the Reading cemetery among the people whom he loved. On the stone above it are cut the words of which, in themselves and in their context, he was peculiarly fond. Some will remember the ring of triumph with which he was wont to read, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory."

THE impression that Mr. Willcox made during the last years of his life upon one of keen discernment and wide experience is shown by the following words spoken at the funeral by Professor GEORGE HERBERT PALMER of Harvard University:

If to-day, instead of sitting by our dead friend, we stood by the sea, and a departing vessel was carrying him away to far lands, —so long as he could hear us, we should call to him; and as the vessel took him beyond the reach of our voice, we should turn to one another and speak words of praise, of affection, of gratitude. It would not be the events of his life that we should turn to then, but to himself, to his character; a

thousand little things would spring up in our minds,—insignificant to those who had not known him; significant of a rich nature to us who had learned to love.

And so it is to-day. We cannot carry our friend's body forth from this house without saying to one another that we loved him, without speaking real things, each of us recalling for himself those features of that large character which most appealed to him.

I had known Dr. Willcox for twenty years, and during that time I think that which most impressed me was the orderliness of his life. It appeared in him throughout, as does always this rare and permeating virtue, wherever found. It showed itself in his accuracy and simplicity of speech. It showed itself in his lucid handwriting. Who ever got a letter from Dr. Willcox and was unable to read any word of it or doubted of its meaning? It showed itself in

his exactitude of business relations. Every one could depend on that man; no one's affairs went astray through carelessness on his part. Each corner was tied; everything was fastened; each part of an affair found its proper place. No wonder, then, that all around celebrated his sagacity and leaned on his judgment. And we, to whom the world seemed more confusing and who had less learned to steer our way through its doubtful paths, turned to him to ask what would happen under difficult circumstances, and to know what was the wisest way of ordering affairs. All our affairs he treated as his own; selfishness was not in him. He sought a law beyond himself, and was ever its servant. And one may say that, because he did thus so fully discern a divine order in everything, and sought to identify his will with it, — one may say that he was at times impatient, intolerant. He seemed sometimes to push his own way regardless of

the way of others; yet never really his own way, — always that one which he believed to be the proper, the divine, the kind way.

Many times I have differed from him; but I never differed from him in anger, nor could I discover the least alienation when my opinion was unlike his own. We sat down; we compared opinions. If we could not make our judgments square, we compared them with respect. Then he pushed on in the way he thought right, I in the way I thought so, and we were closer friends afterwards.

For this orderliness of spirit which so impressed me in my friend, this orderliness was no passive affair; it was active. "Make the right prevail," Dr. Willcox said, — not merely enjoy its privileges. So, everywhere, he went forward to extirpate pain, disorder, poverty. Everywhere he sought out the needy, and tenderly encouraged them. How many girls are scattered over this

country — how many boys, too — whose lives he has set in order through the education he provided! And never was he content merely to hand over his benefaction. It was the *person* that he sought to aid. He did not seek merely to put him in outward circumstances of convenience; but he always pressed on to know the individuals whom he assisted.

Every institution, among the many with which he was connected, became an object of personal affection to him, was regarded by him almost as his child, and those who were in its charge were watched over by him as members of his family. Indeed, it was in this connection that I came to know him best. In the early years when Miss Freeman was president of Wellesley, the number of persons engaged in the conduct of that important college who were acquainted with education was much smaller than at present. Dr. Willcox had had large

experience in educational matters, and Miss Freeman turned to him continually, and more and more leaned on his sagacious counsel. He thought of her apparently as if she were his own daughter; I well know she looked up to him as a second father; and few were the visits more welcome to our home than those in which he came and sat down by our fireside and talked of Wellesley's affairs as if there were nothing more important to him in the world.

But he exhibited another extension of this principle of orderliness more remarkable still. Orderliness is a somewhat dangerous virtue; it stiffens; one is apt to become angular in it; it fixes one in habits once acquired. That was not the case with him. Nowadays we all recognize that the order of the universe is a developing order; that evolution, growth, development, marks the divine nature of the world. Dr. Willcox had felt this deeply; and it was

extraordinary to see one of such clear, precise, sharply-cut judgments and habits capable of continual growth. Up to his very last years, Dr. Willcox was always in the van, a leader of whatever he engaged in. We always thought of him as belonging to the young party at Wellesley, even when he was approaching his eightieth year. And I believe it would have been equally true, however long he had continued, that his face would have been steadily set to the future; out of the past he would have brought strength and courage; but he would have allowed the future to be dictated to solely by its own law.

How reverent was his piety, how deep his faith, how unshaken by all the changes going on in our time, — changes to which he so hopefully looked! But how feeble is any description of a person! An individual is too large to be shut up in words. Forth he goes to unite with the infinite life. Cer-

tainly this was the case with him of whom we speak. He reached out in every direction. He accepted constant growth, constant dependence. For, after all, what I have been speaking of as this orderly disposition in Dr. Willcox was in reality only the recognition of his Father's guidance. He spoke not his own words; he thought not his own thoughts; he sought everywhere to hear the voice of his Father and to be guided by that.

All of us recognize that death has a place in life; yet it ordinarily seems a disturbance, something abnormal, something breaking the proper current of affairs, something which in a righteous world would not be permitted. From time to time we encounter death where it seems to reveal to us what it should always be, — a death that is a veritable summing up of hopes, a death that falls appropriately, and so far from hindering, seems rather to crown. It is a

happy circumstance that he who ordered his life so rightly during its continuance found also an orderly death. He retained his powers to the very last. His cheer, his humor, his sagacity, his deep home affections, his wide interest in public affairs, went on to the very limit of the period allowed to man, and then he crossed over to the larger company, surrounded by all those whom he had loved best, and by the large esteem of the community in which he lived. May our last end be like his!

And when the strife is fierce, the warfare long,
Steals on the ear the distant triumph-song,
And hearts are brave again, and arms are strong.
Alleluia.

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